

Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-09 H-02 INR-09 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-14 USIA-12 T-03

GAC-01 ACDA-19 MC-02 OMB-01 RSR-01 /106 W
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R 090600 Z MAR 73

FM AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0518

INFO AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

CINCPACREP CANBERRA

NAVCOMSTA HAROLD E HOLT

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E. O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: MARR, PINT, AS

SUBJ: AUSTRALIAN PARLIAMENT APPROVES STATEMENT ON
JOINT FACILITIES

REF: A) CANBERRA 1332 B) CANBERRA 1301

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: DEBATE IN HOUSE ON BARNARD' S STATEMENT
ON JOINT FACILITIES OF FEB 28 TOOK PLACE AS SCHEDULED
MARCH 7 AND IN SENATE ON MARCH 8. LIBERAL- COUNTRY PARTY
OPPOSITION IN HOUSE SOUGHT MERELY TO AMEND STATEMENT TO
INCLUDE WORDS THAT EXISTENCE OF FACILITIES DOES NOT
ENDANGER AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL INTEREST AND INDEPENDENCE.
AMENDMENT WAS DEFEATED AFTER SHORT DEBATE ON PARTY LINE
VOTE OF 64-55. ALP PARLIAMENTARY CAUCUS WHICH MET
BEFORE DEBATE MARCH 7, CAME OUT IN STRONG SUPPORT OF
BARNARD' S HANDLING OF DEFENSE PORTFOLIO BUT APPARENTLY
CAME CLOSE TO RE- CONSIDERING PARLIAMENTARY STATEMENT
ON JOINT FACILITIES. THREAT OF OPPOSITION CENSURE
MOTION OF BARNARD' S HANDLING OF DEFENSE MATTERS DID
NOT MATERIALIZE. END SUMMARY.

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2. AFTER TWO DAYS OF ALP TENSENESS OVER BARNARD'S HANDLING OF DEFENSE MATTERS, AND BARNARD'S ANGRY DENUNCIATION OF HARTLEY'S ACCUSATIONS, ALP CAUCUS MEETING RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY ON MARCH 7 TO SUPPORT BARNARD AGAINST ANY CENSURE MOTION IN PARLIAMENT. AFTER CONSIDERING INTRODUCTION CENSURE MOTION, LIBERAL / COUNTRY PARTY OPPOSITION DECIDED AGAINST SUCH A COURSE.

3. OPPOSITION DID, HOWEVER, ENGAGE IN SCHEDULED DEBATE IN HOUSE MARCH 7 ON BARNARD'S STATEMENT ON JOINT FACILITIES AND LOST IN ITS ATTEMPT TO ADD LANGUAGE TO THE STATEMENT TO EFFECT THAT EXISTENCE OF FACILITIES DOES NOT JEOPARDIZE AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL INTEREST AND INDEPENDENCE. ALP SPEAKERS IN HOUSE REJECTED THIS LANGUAGE ON BASIS IT WOULD PREJUDICE PROPOSED NEGOTIATIONS OVER NORTHWEST CAPE. RESULTANT PARTY LINE VOTE 64-55 DEFEATED OPPOSITION'S LANGUAGE.

4. DEBATE IN SENATE MARCH 8 LED FOR GOVERNMENT BY SENATOR WILLESEE WHO ALSO IN MINISTER ASSISTING FOREIGN MINISTER. HE PARALLELED PARLIAMENTARY STATEMENT ON JOINT FACILITIES CLOSELY AND EMPHASIZED THAT GOVERNMENT WAS TO HAVE NEGOTIATIONS ABOUT NORTHWEST CAPE STATION. SENATE OPPOSITION LEADER WITHERS MADE NO ATTEMPT TO BRING MOTION TO AMEND PARLIAMENTARY STATEMENT. THERE WAS NO VOTE IN SENATE AND DEBATE FACILITIES HAS THUS BEEN DEBATED IN BOTH HOUSES AND ENCOUNTERED VERY LITTLE CRITICISM FROM OPPOSITION PARTIES.

5. TO ALP WATCHERS, EVENTS OF SOME INTEREST TOOK PLACE IN ALP CAUCUS MORNING MARCH 7 BEFORE DEBATE ON PARLIAMENTARY STATEMENT REFERRED TO ABOVE. ACCORDING TO STORY IN FINANCIAL REVIEW WRITTEN BY FORMER BARNARD STAFFER BRIAN TOOHEY, MINISTER FOR ENVIRONMENT MOSS CASS MOVED MOTION IN CAUCUS WHICH WOULD HAVE LED TO INTERNAL ALP RECONSIDERATION OF JOINT FACILITIES STATEMENT. CASS MOTION FAILED OF ADOPTION PARTLY BECAUSE IT WAS FIRST NECESSARY TO SUSPEND STANDING ORDERS OF CAUCUS AND THIS REQUIRED MAJORITY VOTE OF 47 FROM AMONG 93 MEMBERS. CASS' MOTION TO SUSPEND ORDERS SAID TO HAVE RECEIVED 39 VOTES OF 65 MEMBERS PRESENT AND WAS DEFEATED. APPARENTLY BARNARD WAS NOT PRESENT IN CAUCUS WHEN VOTE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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TAKEN.

6. NEWSPPAERS ARE DIVIDED IN THEIR COMMENTS; CANBERRA TIMES BREATHES SIGH OF RELIEF THAT ALP HAS RESOLVED ITS PROBLEMS, AT LEAST FOR TIME BEING, AND IS ABLE TO GET ON WITH BUSINESS OF GOVERNMENT. SYDNEY MORNING HERALD EDITORIALIZES THAT OPPOSITION PARTIES IN PARLIAMENT MAKE STRANGE BEDFELLOWSFOR ALP LEFT WING IN ATTEMPTS TO UNDERMINE BARNARD'S POSITION. HERALD GOES ON TO SAY THAT THERE WILL BE FALLING OUT BETWEEN LIBERAL-COUNTRY PARTY REPRESENTATIVES AND LEFT WING OVER JOINT FACILITIES. AUSTRALIAN AGE CONTINUES TO CRITICIZE WHITLAM OVER HIS REFUSAL TO ANNOUNCE PURPOSES OF JOINT FACILITIES AND STATES NEWSMEN WILL HAVE TO GO BACK TO READING AVIATION WEEK AND U. S. CONGRESSIONAL RECORD TO FIND OUT WHAT IS GOING ON.

7. COMMENT: ALTHOUGH MR. BARNARD SEEMS ASSURED FOR THE TIME BEING OF ALP PARLIAMENTARY SUPPORT IN THE HANDLING OF DEFENSE PORTFOLIO, HIS PARLIAMENTARY STATEMENT ON JOINT FACILITITES SEEMS DESTINED TO BE SUBJECT OF CONTINUED INTRA- PARTY DEBATE. IF ACCURATELY REPORTED, VOTE IN ALP CAUCUS MARCH 7 CAME CLOSE TO RAISING THE WHOLE SUBJECT AGAIN. OPPOSITION AMENDMENT TO PARLIAMENTARY STATEMENT WAS MILD ENOUGH AND IT IS EXPECTED LIBERAL AND COUNTRY PARTY LEADERS ARE PREPARED TO LET MATTER REST.
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*** Current Handling Restrictions *** n/a

*** Current Classification *** LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: n/a
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 09 MAR 1973
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: boyleja
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1973CANBER01402
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: n/a
Errors: n/a
Film Number: n/a
From: CANBERRA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1973/newtext/t19730323/aaaahxc.tel
Line Count: 146
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 73 CANBERRA 1332, 73 CANBERRA 1301
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: boyleja
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 15 OCT 2001
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <15-Oct-2001 by kelleyw0>; APPROVED <17-Oct-2001 by boyleja>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: <DBA CORRECTED> jms 971113
Subject: AUSTRALIAN PARLIAMENT APPROVES STATEMENT ON JOINT FACILITIES
TAGS: MARR, PINT, AS
To: CINCPAC FOR POLAD
CINCPACREP CANBERRA
EA
NAVCOMSTA HAROLD E HOLT
SECSTATE WASHDC
WELLINGTON
Type: TE

Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005